

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
60th MEETING**

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**CAP:
PricewaterhouseCoopers Collaboration with the Financial Tracking Service**

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Background

Given the heavy financial response to the tsunami and concerns about the UN's ability to handle such large sums, the Secretary-General's office is particularly interested in PricewaterhouseCoopers' offer of *pro bono* services. The offer affords a clear opportunity to highlight the UN's effective use of funds, and to make a conspicuous effort to disseminate that information in real time. The question in the media come July 2005 or January 2006 is likely to be: 'What has the UN done with its X billion dollars?' One main reason the UN accepted PWC's offer of support was to position the UN better to answer that question, by showing the correct figure of how much the UN has received and what is being done with the money.

How has collaboration developed?

PWC launched an exploratory phase of consultations with donors, a sample of IASC member agencies, and an NGO consortium. The goal has been to develop an information strategy in two parts:

- (1) *Identifying stakeholders' information needs regarding accountability and transparency*, i.e. who needs to know what, when do they need to know it, and what is the best platform on which to disseminate that information? (Donors, including staff of the US Congress, have expressed an interest in seeing real-time information on expenditure rates.)
- (2) *Assessing existing and potential information*, i.e. what meaningful information can participating agencies provide in real time, at little added burden to themselves?

Where does collaboration now stand?

The plan is to show simple, straightforward information for a general target audience. The mere fact of putting this information on a website – as much as its content – may go a long way to forestalling public and political mistrust of the UN.

PWC is exploring ways to tap into existing information flows within agencies and between them and donors. For example, agencies monitor expenditure rates for their internal

management purposes. Sharing that information on a public platform would reinforce transparency and publicise effectiveness, with minimal burden to the agency.

Specifically, for funded Indian Ocean Flash Appeal projects, PWC will likely propose gathering the following information and reconfiguring an existing website to display it: project start and end dates, objectives, beneficiaries, and expenditure rate. (Note that agencies are already providing all of this information except expenditure rates via their Flash Appeal inputs and project summaries.) The website will also provide links, possibly with summary highlights and key indicators, to whatever narrative project implementation reports agencies provide. (Narrative reports are critical: from the start, agencies and OCHA have pointed out to PWC that numerical information, e.g. expenditure rates, needs to be put in context by qualitative information if it is to be meaningful.)

This initiative is:

- A vehicle and a platform for agencies to publicise their effectiveness.
- A chance for the UN to pre-empt criticism regarding transparency and accountability.

Proposed Actions by the IASC WG members:

- Assure full political and managerial support for the initiative
- Request technical-level staff to work with PWC and the UN's focal points for financial tracking